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HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS, INCLUDING ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

Afghanistan, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, Malawi, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Monaco, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Norway, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Venezuela: draft resolution

Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization

The General Assembly,

Recalling its previous resolutions on the subject, in particular resolutions 50/185 of 22 December 1995 and 49/190 of 23 December 1994,

Reaffirming that United Nations electoral assistance and support for the promotion of democratization are provided only at the specific request of the Member State concerned,

Recognizing the usefulness of a comprehensive and balanced approach in the activities carried out by the United Nations in this field in order to contribute to the strengthening of both democracy and all human rights within the country concerned,

Acknowledging that United Nations electoral assistance has facilitated the holding of successful elections in several Member States which resulted in the orderly and non-violent assumption of office by elected officials, recognizing that elections can be free and fair only if held free of coercion and intimidation, and underlining the importance of respect for the results of elections that have been verified as free and fair,

Taking note of the progress review and recommendations adopted by the Third International Conference of the New or Restored Democracies on Democracy and Development,[1] held at Bucharest, Romania, from 2 to 4 September 1997, in particular the recognition that the organization and administration of elections in the new or restored democracies often benefit from the help of outside resources and expertise and the request that higher priority be given in resource allocation to governance, democracy and participation programmes in order to sustain the momentum of current progress in holding elections,

Recalling the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights on 25 June 1993,[2] in particular the recognition therein that assistance provided upon the request of Governments for the conduct of free and fair elections is of particular importance in the strengthening of a pluralistic civil society,

Noting the establishment of the Association of African Election Authorities which held its founding meeting at Kampala, Uganda, from 14 to 16 January 1997,

Welcoming the support provided by States to the electoral assistance activities of the United Nations, inter alia, through the provision of electoral experts and observers, as well as through contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund for Electoral Observation,

Noting the continuing submission and evolving nature of requests for electoral assistance by Member States,

Noting also that first-time democratic elections have already been held in many Member States, creating a need for reassessment and adaptation of the forms of assistance routinely provided previously, in particular to meet the needs of supporting subsequent elections,

Recognizing the need for strengthening national capacity-building, electoral institutions and civic education in the requesting countries in order to consolidate and regularize the achievements of previous elections,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General on enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections,[3]

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[1] A/52/334, annex, appendix.

[2] A/CONF.157/24 (Part I), chap. III.

[3] A/52/474.

1. Takes note with appreciation of the report of the Secretary-General on United Nations activities aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections;[1]

2. Commends the electoral assistance provided to Member States at their request by the United Nations, and requests that such assistance continue on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the guidelines on electoral assistance, recognizing that the fundamental responsibility of organizing free and fair elections lies with Governments;

3. Requests the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat to continue to inform Member States on a regular basis about the requests received, responses given to those requests and the nature of the assistance provided;

4. Also requests that the United Nations continue its efforts to ensure, before undertaking to provide electoral assistance to a requesting State, that there is adequate time to organize and carry out an effective mission for providing such assistance, that conditions exist to allow a free and fair election and that provisions can be made for adequate and comprehensive reporting of the results of the mission;

5. Commends the steps taken by the United Nations to ensure the continuation and consolidation of the democratization process in certain Member States requesting assistance, including the provision of technical advice on such issues as, inter alia, election organization and budgets, electoral laws, domestic procurement, training, computerization and comparative electoral systems, before and after elections have taken place, and needs-assessment missions aimed at recommending programmes that might contribute to the consolidating of the democratization process, and requests that such efforts be strengthened;

6. Recommends that the Electoral Assistance Division continue to provide post-election assistance, as appropriate, to requesting States and electoral institutions, in order to contribute to the sustainability of their electoral processes, as provided for in the report of the Secretary-General, and that it study, in cooperation with relevant United Nations offices, ways of defining more clearly the activities related to democratic consolidation that the United Nations might usefully undertake in assisting the efforts of interested States in this regard;

7. Also recommends that United Nations electoral assistance be geared towards comprehensive observation of the electoral process, beginning with registration and other pre-election activities and continuing through the campaign, election day and the announcement of the election results, in instances where more than technical assistance is required by the requesting State;

8. Requests the Secretary-General to take further steps to support States that request assistance by, inter alia, enabling the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in accordance with her mandate, to support democratization activities related to human rights concerns, including,

inter alia, human rights training and education, assistance for human rights-related legislative reform, strengthening and reform of the judiciary, assistance to national human rights institutions and advisory services on treaty accession, reporting and international obligations as related to human rights;

9. Requests the United Nations Development Programme to continue its commendable programmes of assistance for governance, in particular those for strengthening democratic institutions, and participation and linkages between concerned sectors of society and Governments;

10. Recalls the establishment by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Trust Fund for Electoral Observation, and calls upon Member States to consider contributing to the Fund;

11. Stresses the importance of reinforced coordination within the United Nations system, including cooperation with all relevant departments within the United Nations Secretariat, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Volunteers, which provide advisory services and technical assistance to requesting Member States, underlines the need for the prompt exchange of information concerning requests for electoral assistance by Member States directed to any of the aforementioned entities, and encourages the Electoral Assistance Division to strengthen its collaboration with those entities, including through an exchange of personnel when appropriate;

12. Notes with appreciation additional efforts being made to enhance cooperation with other international, governmental and non-governmental organizations in order to facilitate more comprehensive and need-specific responses to requests for electoral assistance, and expresses appreciation to those Member States, regional organizations and non-governmental organizations that have provided observers or technical experts in support of United Nations electoral assistance efforts;

13. Encourages the Secretary-General, through the Electoral Assistance Division, to respond to the evolving nature of requests for assistance and the growing need for specific types of medium-term expert assistance aimed at supporting and strengthening the existing capacity of the requesting Government, in particular through enhancing the capacity of national electoral institutions;

14. Requests the Secretary-General to provide the Electoral Assistance Division with adequate human and financial resources to allow it to carry out its mandate, and to continue to ensure that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is able to respond, within its mandate and in close coordination with the Electoral Assistance Division, to the increasing number of requests from Member States for advisory services;

15. Recommends that the Secretary-General consider ways to continue to improve coordination and to strengthen further the efforts of the Electoral Assistance Division, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations system in general to respond to its increased and evolving responsibilities in the field of electoral assistance and democratization as reflected in the present resolution, and to include his

recommendations in this regard in his report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session;

16. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session on the implementation of the present resolution, in particular on the status of requests from Member States for electoral assistance and verification, and on his efforts to enhance the Organization's support of the democratization process in Member States.